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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 21 September 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Election of the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

1. **The Chairman** said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/163, by which article 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly had been amended to stipulate that each Main Committee should elect a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, she would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Darwish (Egypt), Mr. Sial (Pakistan) and Ms. Cardoze (Panama), endorsed by the Group of African States, the Group of Asian States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States respectively, as Vice-Chairmen of the Committee.

2. *Mr. Darwish (Egypt), Mr. Sial (Pakistan) and Ms. Cardoze (Panama) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.*

3. **The Chairman** said that since there were no other nominations for the post of Rapporteur she would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Jaremczuk (Poland), endorsed by the Group of Eastern European States, as Rapporteur.

4. *Mr. Jaremczuk (Poland) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/54/250 and A/54/251; A/C.5/54/1; A/C.5/54/L.1)

5. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to document A/C.5/54/1, which contained a letter from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee concerning the allocation of items to the Fifth Committee, and to the note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation for the Fifth Committee during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly (A/C.5/54/L.1).

6. The General Assembly, on the basis of document A/54/250 on the organization of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly and in the interests of efficiency and cost-saving, had decided to draw to the attention of the Main Committees: that morning meetings should start at 10 a.m. promptly and adjourn by 6 p.m. and that no meetings should be held on weekends (para. 12); that the requirement of the presence of one quarter of the members to declare a meeting open should be waived (para. 13); that delegations should be reminded of the utmost importance of punctuality (para. 14); that delegations should strive to limit the number of reports requested from the Secretariat (paras. 28 and 32) as well as debate on reports submitted (para. 30); that the Fifth Committee should consider accepting without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a prescribed limit, namely, US$ 25,000 (para. 33); that no organ should take a decision involving either a change in the programme budget approved by the General Assembly or the possible requirement of expenditure unless it had taken account of a report from the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of the proposal (para. 35); that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters (para. 37); that items on which decisions were not required at the main part of the session should be deferred to a later session and that similar items should be grouped together (para. 47); and that the Fifth Committee should complete its work not later than 10 December 1999 (para. 11).

7. Regarding the status of preparedness of documentation (A/C.5/54/L.1), she noted that of the 180 reports by the Secretariat to be considered by the Fifth Committee, many had been postponed from the fifty-third to the fifty-fourth session, and that a large number of the new reports had not yet been issued, notwithstanding the six-week rule.

8. **Mr. Sareva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Fifth Committee's programme of work was no less heavy than in previous sessions, but that the Committee would be able to show results if it was pragmatic, focused and to the point. The Committee was under an obligation to take decisions on a number of questions, with consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 at the top of the list. Then came the methodology for the next scale of assessments, the financing of peacekeeping operations, the budgets of the International Tribunals, the report of the Committee on Conferences and the report of the International Civil Service Commission. Consideration of the important issues deferred from the fifty-third to the fifty-fourth session could not be allowed to drag on beyond mid-October. Lastly, the European Union expected that consideration of results-based budgeting would yield concrete results.

9. He noted that, according to document A/C.5/54/L.1, the Secretary-General's reports on the review of the operation and functioning of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda would not be available before January 2000, whereas the General Assembly, in its resolutions 53/212 and 53/213, had called for their issuance no later than 1 November 1999. He asked whether it would be possible

to have the reports made available before the end of the current session and requested clarification of the reasons for the regrettable delay, which would mean that the Fifth Committee could not consider the reports, to which the European Union attached great importance, at the same time as the budget proposals for the two Tribunals.

10. The Committee must act in a spirit of cooperation, with as much informal contact between interested delegations as possible, without excluding anyone. The Committee should simply take note of undisputed reports.

11. **Mr. Barnwell** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the six-week rule must be complied with. The late issuance of a large number of reports reflected a chronic state of affairs which must be addressed seriously under the relevant agenda item. He noted with great concern the continued non-compliance with paragraphs 24 and 25 of General Assembly resolution 52/214 B and paragraphs 10 and 11 of resolution 53/208 B, and with the provisions of the rules of procedure concerning the format of reports. He called for clarification of the reasons for non-compliance regarding format, and reiterated the Group's reluctance to consider reports not submitted in full conformity with General Assembly decisions.

12. The Group of 77 and China insisted that informal consultations should be conducted in a transparent manner, that there should not be any parallel informal consultations and that consultations should be announced well in advance to enable all delegations to participate.

13. The Group of 77 and China were ready to act in a spirit of cooperation and attached great importance to the efficient functioning of the Committee. The Committee should strive to avoid night and weekend meetings, and, should it be unable to complete its work by the deadline, the Bureau should plan to hold a longer first part of the resumed session than in previous years.

14. **Mr. Orr** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that the Fifth Committee must give priority to its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, the scale of assessments and implementation of the programme for reform of the Organization, in particular results-based budgeting and the Development Account. The three delegations would participate in the work of the Committee in a spirit of cooperation with a view to seeking the broadest possible agreement so as to enable the Committee to complete its work efficiently.

15. The Committee must demonstrate responsibility and discipline so as to complete its work by 10 December 1999; it should resort to night or weekend meetings only in an emergency or if unforeseen difficulties arose so that all could take part in decisions. To that end the Fifth Committee should work on the basis of a list of priorities and an agreed calendar of meetings and should respect the deadlines for consideration of each agenda item.

16. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), responding to questions concerning reports on the operation and functioning of the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, said that the Secretary-General had entrusted preparation of the studies to a group of experts comprising five independent judges. The group's mandate had specified that the reports were to be submitted on 31 August 1999. Unfortunately, the judges had not been able to begin their work until April 1999, and had realized that more research than anticipated was required. They had indicated that the reports would not be completed before the end of November, which, taking into account the time necessary for translation, would put back their issuance to early 2000.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.